

Abstract 452

TITLE: HIV Prevention in the Next Millenium: Evolution and Revolution

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BACKGROUND: As the HIV epidemic begins its third decade, it is appropriate to reflect on the state of our HIV prevention efforts. No doubt, our understanding of how the epidemic spreads and of effective means of prevention have expanded over the past two decades. Nevertheless, HIV incidence rates continue to increase in some populations, especially among communities of color and young gay men, suggesting that the status quo in prevention is not enough.

METHODS AND RESULTS: Accordingly, we need to consider bold steps to achieve effective HIV prevention in the next millennium. This should include acceleration of ongoing efforts in four areas (EVOLUTION): (i) promotion of interventions to achieve safe injection practices and safer sexual behavior among high-risk populations; (ii) HIV reporting and appropriate HIV testing of pregnant women and high-risk populations; (iii) strengthening links between STD control and HIV prevention programs; and (iv) development of prevention technologies, including rapid HIV diagnostic tests and female-controlled barriers, and of a clearer understanding of how antiretrovirals affect HIV transmission. However, even more critical for successful prevention are radical changes in our public policies (REVOLUTION). First, we need to rely more extensively on structural interventions, i.e., interventions that remove societal barriers to prevention. Although rarely used so far in HIV prevention, these have been successful in other public health areas and show promise as low-cost, efficient ways to promote behavior change. Second, communities of color must mobilize for HIV prevention through community-based leadership and grass roots-organizations. Third, as an HIV vaccine offers our best chance for broad-scale HIV prevention, vaccine development efforts need to receive much stronger support from political leaders and the public. Fourth, we need a more coherent, sustained and integrated approach to the financing of HIV prevention and treatment here and abroad.

CONCLUSIONS: These accelerated efforts and profound changes in public policy hold the most promise for effective HIV prevention in the next millennium.

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